DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

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Sinai Security Arrangements

Statement of the Issue

The Basic Commitment. The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty provides that Israel will complete its withdrawal from the Sinai by April 1982 and that UN forces and observers will carry out its provisions for monitoring permanent security arrangements after that date. In a letter dated March 26, 1979 to Sadat and Begin, President Carter pledged that if the UN Security Council failed to establish the permanent arrangements called for in the Treaty, the U.S. would ensure the establishment and maintenance of an acceptable alternative multinational force.

The Present Problem. In September 1979, in talks designed to reach agreement on arrangements to monitor Sinai during the period up to final withdrawal after the UN Security Council had refused to renew the mandate of the UN Emergency Force, Secretary Vance agreed with Foreign Ministers Dayan and Ali that Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Israel, and the U.S. would meet in April 1981 to negotiate the permanent security monitoring arrangements in the Sinai. At that time, it was hoped that by April 1981 an autonomy agreement on the West Bank and Gaza would have been achieved which would have materially improved the atmosphere for international participation in a permanent UN or multinational force. We must now proceed on the premise that we may have to come up with a solution under circumstances that are less promising--in particular, that Soviet and Arab opposition will make forming a UN force impossible, and that it may even be difficult to persuade other states to participate in a non-UN multinational force.

Significance of the Negotiations. The negotiations scheduled to begin in April, 1981 will deal with a central requirement of the Treaty itself and will be one of the key tests of the Treaty's permanence and effectiveness. The ability of the United States to meet its commitment to both Egypt and Israel is another important aspect. The manner in which the negotiations are conducted also will have a significant impact on the broader Middle East peace process, affecting both Egypt's perception of its relationship with us and Israeli evaluations of the extent and character of the U.S. commitment to Israel's security.

Positions of the Parties. Israel has taken the position that it will not withdraw to the agreed final lines until a United Nations or alternative multinational force (MNF) is in place. Israel is particularly concerned that a MNF be capable of assuring freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran.

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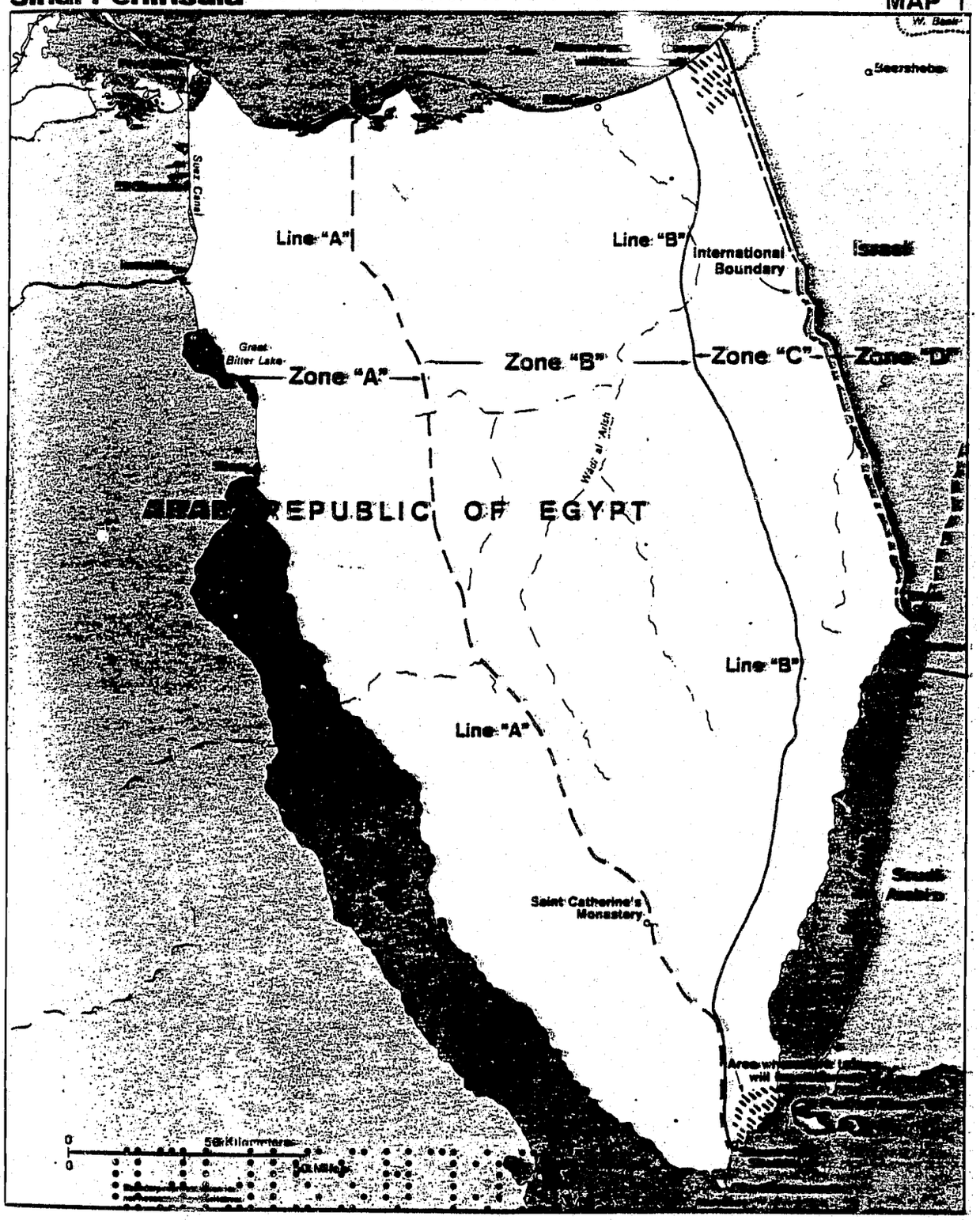
Sinai Peninsula

MAP 1



Representation of original map included in treaty.

In other words, Israel wants a force, not merely observers. Egypt maintains that Israel is unconditionally bound to complete its withdrawal from the Sinai in April 1982, regardless of whether a United Nations or alternative multinational force is in place. But Egypt understands the importance Israel attaches to emplacement of a force and will cooperate in trying to find a solution. Both sides would probably accept the U.S. playing the role alone as monitor and guarantor of the Treaty if it proves impossible to get others to participate.

A related problem is Israel's growing interest in a U.S. military presence in the Sinai which could not only carry out the security provisions of the Peace Treaty but also contribute to our effort to develop an effective response capability to defend Western interests in Southwest Asia. Egypt is unlikely to be receptive to this idea. While Sadat has offered the U.S. the use of "facilities" (not "bases") elsewhere on Egyptian territory, he has specifically ruled out staging from the Sinai.

Current Arrangements. Israel withdrew to the interim Ras-Mohammed El-Arish line on schedule in January 1980. The force limitation provisions of the Treaty are being monitored during this interim period by the Sinai Field Mission (SFM), composed of U.S. State Department employees and contract personnel from E Systems, as well as by periodic U.S. high-level aircraft photography, the basis for a report which is provided to both sides. Although there have been some occasional misunderstandings, our monitoring arrangements are highly regarded by both sides.

The Time Constraint

Although a full year before final withdrawal has been allowed for negotiation of the post-1982 arrangements, this does not give us as much time as might appear at first glance. The Israelis will have to begin physical preparations for their withdrawal from Zones C and D at least several months in advance if the withdrawal is to be completed by April 1982. Moreover, they will probably insist that the supervisory force must be in place before they begin their final withdrawal. Thus, several additional months must be allowed to organize and deploy a force after agreement is reached on it. It will therefore be important to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible after April 1981. The time constraint may in fact make it desirable to get started with discussions with the two sides before the negotiations are due formally to open in April.

What We are Doing: Present Planning

We are presently developing several options, including exploration of the constraints--financial, legal, and Congressional--that might apply to an expanded U.S. role in the post-1982 supervisory arrangements. We hope to be able to have these staffed

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out by mid-December, together with a proposed scenario for the April negotiations, including the possibility of taking some preliminary steps. We will then produce a decision paper for consideration.

The decision on this issue does not necessarily need to await decisions on the direction of the larger peace process since it deals with consolidating the existing Egypt-Israel peace treaty rather than with the more difficult issue of the West Bank and Gaza. In fact, a prompt step to deal with this issue could be one of the measures which might provide a sense of momentum in the peace process while the new Administration takes time in setting its course in the larger process. The decision should take into account other decisions which may be made on the larger U.S. military presence in the area, though it has a life of its own.

Attachment:

Map of Sinai